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**EDITOR**

Sherry Eskander

Deadline for November articles is Tuesday 25th November

# President's Message

## “Harnessing Our Past to Secure Our Future”

As we approach the official change of Presidential Insignia, I would like to thank President Sue for reminding us that “It’s never too late, or too early”, and she is so right! Once we can conceive an idea, we can find a way to achieve it. You navigated your year with great fortitude, and rose to each occasion with grit and determination to ensure that SI South East England members enjoyed a variety of speakers and activities. Thank you!

Looking forward, my theme for the next year is “Harnessing Our Past to Secure Our Future”; our region has many talented individuals who have made significant contributions, so I would like us to remember to celebrate those within our own ranks who have paved the way for others to build upon.

Over the coming months, as I get to visit each club, I will be keen to hear people’s stories and learn more about the phenomenal women that make up the South East England region. At the same time, I believe in developing our future leaders, so the organisations that I plan to highlight will be those whose work ensures the advancement and safety of young people.

I would like to thank SI Canterbury for your hospitality at the end of September. Your warm welcome gave me a taste for what’s yet to come. I am looking forward to attending your Silent March at the end of November.

I also look forward to serving the region, and thank everyone who has already reached out to offer support and have guided me thus far. I must give a huge thank you to Jane Barnes, who has knitted the fabulous orange flowers for our region. Please let her or me know if you want to purchase any in advance of the 16 Days of Activism.

*Yours in friendship,*

*Roxanne*





# MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

## A Fundraising Coffee Morning for Macmillan Cancer Support



SI Sevenoaks hosted their usual coffee morning for Macmillan Cancer Support on Tuesday 23rd September and were happy to welcome 40 members, friends and guests to Sandie Higgs' home in Riverhead. It was great to have Peggy Duffin and Alison Driscoll with husband Rene from SI Bromley supporting! It was a pleasant day weather-wise, and we raised a total of £347.00 for Macmillan - a big thank you to all the helpers, especially Shirley Brigham, Mary Hogarth and Marilyn Canet who served the coffee! Our picture shows Marilyn in her Macmillan apron, President Margaret Crabtree, Shirley and guests. By Sandie Higgs, SI Sevenoaks



## Supporting Mental Health at the Lord Mayor of Canterbury's Garden Party

It was a lovely, sunny afternoon for the Lord Mayor of Canterbury's Garden Party on 18<sup>th</sup> September, at Whitstable Castle. Lord Mayor Keji Moses chose East Kent Mind as the charity to fundraise for. Mags, Shirley and Val were very



pleased to attend on behalf of SI Whitstable and District. In the run-up to World Mental Health Day on 10<sup>th</sup> October, it was a privilege to support East Kent Mind and hear about the valuable work they do in our community. By Mags Harrison, SI Whitstable and District



# No Girl Should Miss School - the Rowena Period

In recognition of the UN day of the Girl Child and inspired by our speaker, Whitstable and District members made a donation to Freedom4Girls. The charity believes that "No girl should miss school" because of her period. They work in the UK and Kenya to end period poverty and our donation is enough to fund 15 months worth of sanitary products for a community centre.

Our speaker, Rowena Hackford, was born Robert and transitioned in later life. Throughout her career, which was in haulage and education in the UK and internationally, she saw that period poverty limits girls' education. She campaigned to supply period products in schools, educate children about periods and menstrual health and

end the stigma of

menstruation. Rowena now recognises that her "inner girl child" was always present and supporting the girls in her communities. She ended her presentation by telling members and guests that transitioning to Rowena has enhanced and empowered her life.

Many members spoke about their adolescent embarrassment and were shocked that this still occurs. Five prospective members and Sue Edgar joined us in wishing Rowena well. By Jane Webb, Whitstable and District



## Baton Of Hope 2025

in Margate. It was a great turnout, well done to those who attended and a special thanks to the team at Baton Of Hope. A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the Margate event possible. Mike McCarthy is the (Co-Founder, Baton Of Hope UK) The original Baton was crafted by Thomas Lyte. Suicide remains the leading cause of deaths among under 35s in the UK. Until the founding of Baton of Hope in 2023, there had been no national conversation. Today, the baton is the symbol of HOPE. A truly remarkable masterpiece that will help break the stigma of suicide for generations to come. We remembered those we've lost to suicide friends, our loved ones & even people we have never met. We call for action: for change, for proper investment in mental health, raise awareness. To help stop more lives being lost. The event was supported by Karen Brinkman Tvhs Thanet District Council, STAK.life CIC East Kent Mind Oasis, Porchlight, Polly Billington, Community Pav Stone, Frank Leppard photography, Katie Pope Margate Town Action Group 1st Margate Boys' & Girls' Brigade and Community Driving School CIC.

On Monday 22nd September Judith Jackson and Liz Wingrove representing Soroptimist International Whitstable & District attended the Baton Of Hope event

Liz Wingrove Whitstable and District.





# SI Croydon Annual Quiz and Curry Night

Croydon Club held its annual Quiz and Curry Night on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September at the Selsdon Community Hub (formerly known as the Selsdon Centre for the Retired). 40 contestants took part; Bromley Club, Croydon Club and Croydon Vision each had two teams and one team from Selsdon and Sanderstead Rotary Club gave us 7 teams in total.

The questions were set by Danae Bird, and instead of the usual picture rounds, we had a “name the song from the intro” round and then “identify these famous voices” so that our visually-impaired guests were not at a disadvantage – in fact this

probably played to their strengths, because the winners were one of the Croydon Vision teams! Their team won a prize of 6 bottles of wine.



We paused halfway through the evening to enjoy delicious chicken or vegetable biryani prepared for us by Shalini from Croydon Vision, with a selection of accompaniments, followed by cookies provided by Sheila Patel.

The raffle raised £249.00 for Bromley and Croydon Women’s Aid, which was donated during the week of the Big Give to qualify for match funding. The profits from the meal were shared between Croydon Vision and Si Croydon’s Centenary Fund, each of which received just over £88.00.

Many thanks to everyone who took part, to Sheila for co-ordinating the evening, to Danae and Jason for running the Quiz, to Shalini, her husband Phil and a friend who helped to serve the meals, and to Jannet, one of the helpers from Croydon Vision who volunteered to help me sell raffle tickets, and did an amazing job!

By Heather Bailey





# SI Eastbourne & District has a Maritime Time!

At the end of September SI Eastbourne had a somewhat 'Maritime Time'. Mind you being on the coast it should not be that surprising!

The Club undertook one of its beach cleans on 21<sup>st</sup> September. It was a lovely day weather wise and the beach was very clean and we did not collect too much rubbish. The highlight was finding a homemade boat fender, which was too big for our sacks, so we left it by the rubbish bins to be collected. The clean was rounded up by a well earned cup of tea!

Then, at the speaker

meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, we heard all about the Maritime Volunteer Service (which replaced the Royal Navy Auxiliary



Service), which has a unit in Eastbourne. In addition to all the various activities the unit gives to assist the local community – collecting plastic waste from inaccessible places along the coast, escorting the 'little ships' - it has the MVS national training vessel – East Sussex 1. They do take parties out at times, so perhaps some members will be brave enough next summer to don a lifejacket. We shall see (or should I say 'sea'!). But what interested most of the members was that they are licensed to undertake burials at sea (not just scattering ashes, but actual burials) in a designated area in the Channel. By Joyce Boorman- SI Eastbourne & District



**MARITIME VOLUNTEER SERVICE**  
Supporting **YOUR** community with **OUR** people



# Shirley is famous!

SIGBI Head Office were contacted by a post-graduate student from India called Nupur Gill, who wanted to meet Shirley Brigham of SI Sevenoaks to see her knitted teddies and talk about their distribution. Nupur is studying in London and she travelled down to Sevenoaks with a friend to meet Shirley and the teddies. Nupur was very interested to know where the teddies had been sent and Shirley advised to local schools and hospitals and to local police forces as trauma bears and also to Ukraine for the children there. In fact, UNESCO are collecting a further 60 teddies to be sent out to Ukraine shortly! Shirley, who had her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday earlier this year, has knitted over 780 teddies; she has had some arthritis in her hands but plans to take up her knitting needles again very soon! She is hopeful that when things are calmer some of her teddies might find their way to the Gaza Strip to comfort children there. SI Sevenoaks are very proud of Shirley! What a star she is!

By Sandie Higgs, SI Sevenoaks



## Sponsored Knit for Shoebox Appeal

Members of SI Medway and Maidstone took part in the annual Sponsored knit organised by a Blythswood Care volunteer.

Jane and Stella Barnes took part in one at Upchurch on 23 September. The following week the main sponsored knit event was held in Gillingham. Jane took part for a second time and on this occasion was joined by Angela Christie.

The Soroptimist team had raised £185 through the support of family and friends. Monies raised will go towards funding transport costs and additional fillers for the shoeboxes being sent to Kosovo.



Jane Barnes – SI Medway and Maidstone

## Pots and bedding for Sevenoaks Women's Refuge

SI Sevenoaks delivered some quality pots and pans to the Women's Refuge in Sevenoaks on 21st October. We also dropped in some sheets and a lovely bedspread - all very much appreciated! Thanks to members and friends who continue to think of the families in these situations.

By Sandie Higgs, SI Sevenoaks"



## Sevenoaks Soroptimist Explore Pearly Kings

Sevenoaks Soroptimists and visitors from SI Tunbridge Wells and SI East Grinstead were treated to an upbeat and amusing history of the Pearly Kings and Queens by Chris Conlan and his own journey into becoming the Pearly King of Bromley. Over £100 was raised at the meeting which was given to Chris for his charities. He is a member of the Pearly Kings and Queens Society who support a plethora of London charities. Chris is also the Town Crier for Sevenoaks supporting the mayor, councillors and local charities at events in the town. He has been honoured with a British citizen award for Services to the Community (BCAc). He collected his award from Matt Allwright and Karen Featherstone.

The first Pearly King was Henry Croft, born in 1861 an orphan in the workhouse and street sweeper who



started the tradition in the late 19th century to raise money for charities. He covered his suit with mother-of-pearl buttons to stand out and attract attention, which was so successful he inspired others to do the same, creating the Pearly Kings and Queens tradition.

Photograph: Margaret Crabtree (President) presented Chris with a donation.



Pearly Kings and Queens are a charitable group of working-class Londoners who raise money for various causes, identifiable by their ornate suits, hats, and shoes covered in mother-of-pearl buttons. The tradition started in the 19th century with costermongers (street traders) who began decorating their clothes with buttons as a status symbol and for charity collection, evolving into a structured society thanks to Henry Croft.



# Women's Aid 'End Domestic Abuse: Building a brighter future'

The sale of the Orange knitted flower brooches at the Regional AGM and at other Orange themed events raised **£125.**

This money has been paid in to attract the Big Give match funding plus gift aid. This means the Women's Aid charity - End Domestic Abuse - Building a Brighter Future received **£281.25.** They had a target of £20,000 and raised a total of £22,789 during Big Give Week.

NB: Knitted flowers are still available at £2.50 each and supplies are being held by Roxanne and Jane Barnes.



## Enjoying Past President's Lunch

On Saturday 11 October, 12 Past Presidents from across the Region met up for a reunion lunch at the Red Lion in Bletchingley.

This had been organised by Ann Reeves.

It was an enjoyable time being able to get together in a relaxed and informal setting, with good company and food.

Looking forward to the next one.... and a big thank you to Ann for managing to get us all together.

Jane Barnes – Past President (2003-2004)





# Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists donate to The Hygiene Bank

In October it was National Hygiene Week from 6-12 October 2025, to raise awareness about hygiene poverty.

## *Did you know?*

8.7 million Brits have missed a job interview or a day at work because they could not afford hygiene products. One car repair. One lost job. One unexpected bill. That is all it takes for millions of UK adults to be pulled into hygiene poverty and many of us are struggling with these stresses alone.

And the consequences can have long-lasting implications, people avoid going to work or to job interviews, and they severely reduce and limit their social interactions. Hygiene poverty limits access to education, work and to routes out of poverty, yet research shows that over 1 in 5 people in the UK do not know what hygiene poverty is.

The Hygiene Bank highlighted this crisis by creating yellow moments that cannot be ignored. Buildings and landmarks



nationwide were

illuminated in bright yellow to draw attention to the millions who cannot afford everyday hygiene basics.

## *What did we do?*

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists are supporters of the Medway Hygiene Bank. At our October club meeting, we brought donated hygiene products such as shower gel, which were needed. These were delivered to one of their collection points in Medway

during National Hygiene Week and the donated items weighed 37.1kg.

By Jane Barnes – SI Medway and Maidstone

## CHARITY TRUSTEES NEEDED SIGBI Ltd Emergency Relief Fund

We are looking for two volunteers willing to join the Emergency Relief Fund Board as a Trustee.

Please note, this vacancy is only open to members from the UK, Isle of Man, Channel Islands and the Republic of Ireland.

### **Do you:**

- Feel passionately about supporting women and girls affected by natural and man-made disasters?
- Want to work with and contribute to the work of the Emergency Relief Fund Board?

### **About the post:**

- Previous Charity Trustee experience desirable but not essential.
- Need enthusiasm and motivation as a team member.
- The time commitment is minimal (meetings to discuss potential donations and AGM).





# Orange Cafe

On Saturday 25th October I travelled to Soroptimist International Bromley for my final Club visit in my year as President. It was a lovely event organised by our Immediate Past President Alison Driscoll. An 'orange' quiz, coffee and cake and several tables of 'orange' Bric 'n Brac kept us busy. A big thank you for such a warm welcome.



## On The Hub

### Soroptimist International Committees

SIGBI Members needed

Are you looking for a new challenge?



Soroptimist International is looking for SIGBI members to act on one of their five Committees:

- Finance Committee
- Global Impact Committee
- Governance and Risk Management
- SI Foundation Committee

Applications are invited from all SIGBI members with the relevant skills and experience. Full Details are in the SI/UN/CSW then SI Vacancies folder in the Hub Library.

Please submit a one-page CV, with an attached letter, to SIGBI HQ – [hq@sigbi.org](mailto:hq@sigbi.org) no later than Monday, 24 November 2025.



Apply by  
**24 NOVEMBER 2025**



**Help Restore  
Number 63—Our  
Listed Hotel on Ba...**

Organized by  
Helen Scourfield



**£3,900 to goal**

**Donate now!**



# More On The Hub

Soroptimist Action - Improving our Environment is a new film featuring work of SI Clubs across the globe to tackle climate change and protect our planet. Four of our own SIGBI clubs, 2 regions and 7 SIGBI projects are showcased in the film; well done to SI Esperance (2 projects), SI Chaguanas, SI Northern Ireland, SI Yorkshire, SI The Wrekin, and SI Crosby. A trailer for the film is here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rShg4vTOQo> Full film here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAK8qSLWysC>



Soroptimists are featured in Woman magazine this week! With the help of our PR Agency, we have been pitching to magazines about our work on women's safety and the importance of a Gender Impact Assessment to ensure safety measures are sufficient for women working, travelling and going about their daily lives. Our pitch is with many publications and Woman magazine have picked it up. Go get your copy!



## As Nights Grow Darker: Using Gender Impact Assessments to Protect Female Employees in the Hotel Industry | By Gillie O'Rourke

When the lights dim and hotel guests settle down for the night, a different reality often emerges for female workers. For many women – especially shift workers – fewer daylight hours brought about by winter can increase risk of harassment, intimidation, or violence.

[www.hospitalitynet.org](http://www.hospitalitynet.org)

Photo: [Depositphotos](https://www.depositphotos.com)